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# RESPIGHI

## The Birds

Three Botticelli Pictures • Suite in G major

Kyler Brown, Organ  
Chamber Orchestra of New York  
Salvatore Di Vittorio



## Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936):

### Serenata • Trittico botticelliano • Gli uccelli • Suite in G major

The Italian composer Ottorino Respighi is best known for his 'Roman Trilogy': *Fontane di Roma* (Fountains of Rome), *Pini di Roma* (Pines of Rome) and *Feste romane* (Roman Festivals). In the early years of the twentieth century his compositions, along with those of his contemporaries Gian Francesco Malipiero, Alfredo Casella and Ildebrando Pizzetti (the so-called 'Generation of the '80s'), contributed to the revival of Italian symphonic music which had been initiated by Martucci, Sgambati, Bazzini, Mancinelli and others. Embracing the continuity of tradition through his love of the ancient world, Respighi also promoted a renewed appreciation of Renaissance and Baroque musical forms dressed up in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century compositional techniques. Respighi's prolific compositional output comprises about 200 works, including symphonic music and operas, about three dozen transcriptions, and a handful of unfinished works.

Respighi was first noticed with his orchestration of the *Lamento di Arianna* by Claudio Monteverdi (1567- 1643), which was first heard in Berlin in 1908 under Artur Nikisch. The performance received wonderful reviews in the German press (*Allgemeine Musikzeitung* and *Tageblatt*), with praise for Respighi's magnificent elaboration and orchestration. Respighi then drew national attention with the première of his opera *Semirama* in Bologna in November 1910, when Pizzetti wrote: "...one can say with certainty that with his *Semirama* Ottorino Respighi has demonstrated tonight such quality both in his mastery skill and as a composer of opera, to have us believe that in him Italy will soon have one of its most respected musicians". In 1916, at the age of 37, Respighi achieved international recognition with his *Fountains of Rome*.

Respighi studied violin and viola with Federico Sarti at the Liceo Musicale in Bologna, as well as composition with Giuseppe Martucci, and musicology with Luigi Torchi, a scholar of early music. Following his graduation from the conservatory in 1900 he travelled to Russia to become principal violist for the Russian Imperial Theatre Orchestra in St Petersburg, for its season of Italian opera. During his stay he studied composition for five months with Rimsky-Korsakov. He then returned to Bologna to earn a second degree in composition. From 1908 to 1909 he spent some time performing in Germany to study with Max Bruch, before finally returning to Italy, and turning his attention entirely to composition.

Upon being appointed a teacher of composition at the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in 1913, Respighi moved to Rome and lived there for the rest of his life. In 1919 he married a former pupil, the singer Elsa Olivieri- Sangiacomo. From 1923 to 1926 he was director of the Rome Conservatory. In 1925 he collaborated with Sebastiano Arturo Luciani on an elementary textbook entitled *Orpheus*.

*Roman Festivals*, the third part of his 'Roman Trilogy', was given its première by Arturo Toscanini and the New York Philharmonic in 1929. Toscanini recorded the music twice for RCA Victor, first with the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1941 and then with the NBC Symphony Orchestra in 1949. As a result, Respighi's music had considerable success in the United States. The *Toccata* for piano and orchestra was first performed, with Respighi as soloist, under Willem Mengelberg and with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall in November 1928, and the large-scale theme and variations, *Metamorphoseon*, was commissioned for the fiftieth anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

In his rôle as musicologist Respighi was also an enthusiastic scholar of Italian music of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. He published editions of the music of Claudio Monteverdi and Antonio Vivaldi, and of Benedetto Marcello's *Didone*. Because of his devotion to these masters and their compositional styles, he is often seen as an exponent of Neo-Renaissance or Neo-Baroque traditions. Respighi typically preferred combining pre-classical melodic styles and musical forms (such as dance suites) with standard late nineteenth-century romantic harmonies and textures.

In 1932 Respighi was elected to the Royal Academy of Italy. He continued to compose and tour until January 1936, after which he became increasingly ill with a cardiac infection and died of heart failure on 18th April of that year at the age of 56. A year after his burial, his remains were moved to his birthplace Bologna and reinterred at the city's expense.

#### Salvatore Di Vittorio, Potito Pedarra and Luigi Verdi

Unlike Respighi's more austere works, the *Serenata* for small orchestra of 1904 is a short, captivating concert appetizer which shows the more lighthearted side of the Bolognese composer. As his first professional work for small orchestra, the *Serenata*

is considered a precursor of his later, more famous works 'per piccola orchestra' ('small orchestra') such as *Trittico botticelliano* (*Three Botticelli Pictures*) and *Gli uccelli* (The Birds). The *Serenata*, scored for flute, oboe, clarinet and strings, is presented here following its first printed edition in 2012 (edited by Salvatore Di Vittorio).

*Trittico botticelliano* was dedicated to Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, a patron also of such composers as Ravel and Bartók. The work illustrates three paintings by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510) of Florence, which are today preserved in the Uffizi Gallery: *La Primavera* (Spring), *L'adorazione dei Magi* (The Adoration of the Magi), and *La nascita di Venere* (The Birth of Venus). Under the patronage of Mrs Coolidge, the world première was held on 28th September, 1927 at the Konzerthaus in Vienna, under the direction of the composer.

The first movement, *La Primavera* (Spring), is full of effects characteristic of Respighi, with its trills and rich sonorities. It continues with horn and trumpet calls and music that introduces typical dance rhythms. The second and slower movement, *L'adorazione dei Magi* (The Adoration of the Magi) includes a variant on the well-known medieval hymn *Veni, Veni Emanuel*. Less recognizable outside Italy is Respighi's use of the Italian Christmas tune *Tu scendi dalle stelle* (You descend from the stars). The melodies are delicately and ingeniously orchestrated, and feature solos by the flute and bassoon.

The third and final movement, *La nascita di Venere* (The Birth of Venus) brings Respighi back to his more impressionistic side, with light and nimble orchestration coupled with the development of melodies running apart in octaves. It gives a wonderful depiction of Venus rising from the sea. The concluding orchestral effect is quite sublime, as it reaches a soaring, climactic point which then gives way to sudden silence. The movement's subtle, ethereal ending brings the pace of the strings slowly to a close – a delightful breeze of waves from Zephyros, god of the west wind.

In *Gli uccelli* Respighi transcribes and then reinvents vocal and instrumental music from five different composers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Written in 1928, this is one of Respighi's best orchestral works. He was clearly moved to transcribe a variety of bird song into musical notation, and the resulting work captures bird calls as never before. Following the first movement *Prelude*, each of the four movements is named after a type of bird.

The elegant *Prelude* itself is based on an aria by Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710) and introduces a medley of motifs,

which then inspires the other movements. Following its stately introduction, an energetic pulsating motif in the strings gives us a foretaste of later rhythms. *La colomba* (The Dove), the second movement, transports us to another magical place and time, a garden of heavenly delight. This lyrical and sublime music is surely Respighi at his best. The beautiful, memorable, oboe melody is inspired by the French composer and lute-player Jacques de Gallot (c.1625-c.1695), and is surrounded by bird-like effects such as the dove's soft cooing between muted strings, quiet woodwinds and harp. The third movement, *La gallina* (The Hen), is derived from a harpsichord work by Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) and features bird-like clucking in the strings as well as rooster calls in the wind instruments. The constant pecking away of Rameau's motifs is quite entertaining and free-flowing, never expected or calculated in any particular way. The anonymous English melody in the fourth movement, *L'usignolo* (The Nightingale), had previously inspired Respighi to add a recording of the bird's song to his *Pines of Rome* four years earlier. This calmer, relaxed mood is full of chamber-like sections which feature solos including the flute and French horn. *Il Cucù* (The Cuckoo), the final movement, opens with a two-note call by the flute and other wind instruments which build excitement for an orchestral return of the original Pasquini tune.

The original (23') version of the *Suite in G major* for strings and organ is here presented in its world première recording, following the publication of the first printed edition in 2011 (edited by Salvatore Di Vittorio). The shorter (19') version is sometimes confused with this original version. Composed in 1905, Respighi's *Organ Suite* is a neo-baroque work which pays homage to J.S. Bach, Girolamo Frescobaldi and Arcangelo Corelli. Overall, the piece is modelled in the style of the *Concerto Grosso*, a musical partnership where the organ serves as the *concertino* (solo or featured) instrument and the strings are the *ripieno* (ensemble).

The forward momentum of the *Preludio* first movement (here, in its original longer version) is quite exciting, lush and colourful – giving us a taste of Respighi's later flair for bold orchestration, with trills abounding. The *Aria*, which was originally composed as a one-movement work in 1901, is here transcribed by Respighi to include organ. Respighi clearly loved this music, for he also included the *Aria* the same year in his *Suite for flute and strings No. 2, P. 57a*. This expressive work in the style of an *aria di chiesa* is quite lyrical, yet simple and well-balanced. In addition, the music is remarkably poignant – if not dramatic – for such an early work of Respighi. It demonstrates his natural ability for romantic gestures and evolving dynamics.

The influences stemming principally from Frescobaldi become more apparent as the music unfolds in the *Pastorale* and *Cantico*. Frescobaldi's madrigal-like melodies, simple in texture, minor in key, with suggestions of chromaticism, and use of embellished ornamentations, clearly inspired Respighi. Several Frescobaldi works come to mind for this particular comparison. The *Ricerca* in the *Messa della Madonna* (Mass of the Virgin Mary), is one example, as it highlights the kind of devices present in Respighi's *Organ Suite*, notably Frescobaldi's monothematic, chromatic writing, occasional use of augmentation and use of pedal-note in passages approaching a final cadence.

By Respighi's time there had been general recognition of the importance of Frescobaldi's *Fiori musicali*, which had provided models, a century earlier, for Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum*, then the most important textbook for composers. Frescobaldi's influence on the young Respighi, in particular the *Toccata avanti la Messa della Domenica* from *Fiori musicali*, is quite noticeable

in the *Organ Suite*. Frescobaldi's modal awareness and incessant quest for clarity of line, that is, the simple ascending or descending flow of melodies – at times, occurring in sixths –, are on full display here. In the *Organ Suite* Respighi pays due homage to his illustrious predecessors, in music that was to lead to further refinement of his ideals of orchestration and melody in what was to come.

**Salvatore Di Vittorio**

*For more information on Respighi's Serenata and Suite in G major, contact the publisher: Francesco Panasci, Edizioni Panastudio, Corso Via La Mantia, 72, 90138 Palermo, Italy 011.39.091.325.284; panasci@panastudio.it; www.panastudio.it*



### Salvatore Di Vittorio

Palermo-born Salvatore Di Vittorio has achieved international recognition as both a composer and conductor. He has gained considerable attention with his orchestration and completion of Respighi's rediscovered *First Violin Concerto* (Naxos 8.573168) commissioned by Respighi's great nieces and archive curator. In 2010, with the endorsement of the Comune di Bologna, the city of the composer's birth, Di Vittorio and the noted musicologist Luigi Verdi founded the annual international Respighi Prize for composers and soloists. As a composer, Di Vittorio first came to attention when Italian chamber orchestras premiered his early compositions, often in programmes with Respighi's music. The recent world première of his *Symphony No. 3 'Templi di Sicilia'* with the Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana won critical praise in the *Giornale di Sicilia* and *La Repubblica*, and in the world, he received the medal of Palermo from Mayor Leoluca Orlando. Salvatore Di Vittorio's compositions are published by Edizioni Panastudio, and are listed in David Daniels's *Orchestral Music*. A recording of his music is available on Naxos 8.572333.

an interview on Italian state television (RAI) evening news. In recognition of his work in promoting his native Palermo and Sicily around the world, he received the medal of Palermo from Mayor Leoluca Orlando. Salvatore Di Vittorio's compositions are published by Edizioni Panastudio, and are listed in David Daniels's *Orchestral Music*. A recording of his music is available on Naxos 8.572333.



### Kyler Brown

Organist Kyler Brown is Founder/Artistic Director of The Virgin Consort and serves as Director of Music Ministries/Organist at the Church of St Jean Baptiste, NY, and Adjunct Organist at Columbia University. Previously he was Music Director/Organist at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, as well as consultant for the restoration of their historic Æolian-Skinner Organ. Recent recordings of Great Organs of New York (Bischof & Vitacco Records) and Masterpieces from the Church of St Mary the Virgin (Gothic Records) have been hailed by critics. Kyler Brown made his 1992 Lincoln Center début conducting Handel's *Messiah* and has presented recitals throughout the United States and Italy. He has conducted American premières of choral works by Lee Hoiby, Virgil Thomson, James Primosch and Jackson Hill. The Murray Harris/Wicks Organ (2000) at St Jean in this recording comprises four manuals, 122 stops and 81 ranks of pipes.



### Chamber Orchestra of New York 'Ottorino Respighi'

Established in 2006, the Chamber Orchestra of New York 'Ottorino Respighi' is one of the first auditioned orchestras in the history of New York to be devoted entirely to leading young professional musicians. Its triumphant début was held on 11th October, 2007 at Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall, New York. The orchestra's concert series is performed at Carnegie Hall, and its programming presents great works of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including film scores and rarely performed works, as well as earlier music. The orchestra is also the leading ensemble in the United States devoted to Italian repertoire. Under Music Director Salvatore Di Vittorio, who was specially commissioned by the Respighi family to promote Respighi's music, in 2010 the Chamber Orchestra of New York 'Ottorino Respighi' also launched the annual international Respighi Prize for composers and soloists held in New York. <http://www.chamberorchestraofnewyork.org/>

### Chamber Orchestra of New York 'Ottorino Respighi'

Salvatore Di Vittorio, Music Director & Conductor

#### FIRST VIOLINS

Russell Kotcher, concertmaster  
Nicholas Pappone  
Kiwon Nahm  
JoAnna Farrer  
Cynthia Marcus Smith  
Yeolim Nam

#### SECOND VIOLINS

Cecae Pantikian, principal  
Sarah Charness  
Jennifer Ahn  
David Bousso  
Mandy Wolman

#### VIOLAS

Maggie Snyder, principal  
Aleksandr Nazaryan, co-principal  
Santa Maria Pecoraro  
Tobias Roth  
Adam Matthews

#### VIOLONCELLOS

Adrian Daurov, principal  
Michael Midlarsky  
Leigh Stuart

#### CONTRABASSES

Victoria Tsvetkova, principal  
Christopher Johnson

#### FLUTES

Keith Bonner, principal  
John Romeri, piccolo

#### OBOE

Slava Znatchenii, principal

#### CLARINETS

Benjamin Baron, principal  
Nicholas Gallas

#### BASSOONS

Stephanie Corwin, principal  
Maria Jeleztczheva Wildhaber

#### FRENCH HORNS

Dan Wions, principal  
Aleksander Ozolins

#### TRUMPETS

Jerry Gaudi, principal  
Hugo Moreno

#### PERCUSSION

Christopher Thompson

#### HARP

Kristi Shade

#### PIANOFORTE

Aymeric Dupré la Tour

#### CELESTA

David Kaplan

Shanan Estreicher, *operations director*  
Santa Maria Pecoraro, *personnel manager*

One of Respighi's masterpieces, *Gli uccelli* (The Birds) includes transcriptions of birdsong and music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in writing of evocative, captivating lyricism. *Trittico botticelliano*, an illustration of three paintings by Botticelli, employs dance rhythms, modal melodies and a variant of the medieval hymn *Veni, Veni Emmanuel* in deft, often sublime fashion. The *Suite in G major*, cast for strings and organ in the form of a *Concerto grosso*, is heard on this première recording in its original edition.

Ottorino  
**RESPIGHI**  
(1879-1936)

Playing Time  
67:00

<b>1</b>	<b>Serenata, P. 54 (ed. Salvatore Di Vittorio)</b>	<b>4:33</b>
	<b>Trittico botticelliano (Three Botticelli Pictures), P. 151</b>	<b>20:21</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>I. La primavera (Spring): Allegro vivace</b>	<b>6:00</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>II. L'adorazione dei Magi (The Adoration of the Magi): Andante lento</b>	<b>9:22</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>III. La nascita di Venere (The Birth of Venus): Allegro moderato</b>	<b>5:00</b>
	<b>Gli uccelli (The Birds), P. 154</b>	<b>20:36</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>I. Preludio: Allegro moderato</b>	<b>3:03</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>II. La colomba (The Dove): Andante espressivo</b>	<b>4:38</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>III. La gallina (The Hen): Allegro vivace</b>	<b>2:58</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>IV. L'usignolo (The Nightingale): Andante mosso</b>	<b>5:32</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>V. Il cucù (The Cuckoo): Allegro</b>	<b>4:24</b>
	<b>Suite in G major for strings and organ, P. 58 (ed. Salvatore Di Vittorio) *</b>	<b>21:30</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>I. Preludio: Moderato</b>	<b>5:25</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>II. Aria: Lento</b>	<b>5:11</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>III. Pastorale: Andante molto sostenuto</b>	<b>4:36</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>IV. Cantico: Grave</b>	<b>6:18</b>

\* **WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

**Kyler Brown, Organ**  
**Chamber Orchestra of New York 'Ottorino Respighi'**  
**Salvatore Di Vittorio**

Recorded at the Church of St Jean Baptiste, New York, USA, 21st May, 2013 (tracks 10-13) and at the Concert Hall of Adelphi University Performing Arts Center, Long Island, New York, USA, 22nd-24th May, 2013 (tracks 1-9)

Producers: Evan N. Wilson, Salvatore Di Vittorio, Shanan Estreicher • Engineer: Andreas Klein  
Post-production: Brian Forbes • Editor: Salvatore Di Vittorio • Booklet notes: Salvatore Di Vittorio  
Cover: Paolo Zeccara • Publisher (tracks 1 and 10-13): Edizioni Panastudio, Palermo, Italy